

Museum Notes

for the week of August 9 – 15, 2026

by Kristen Parrott, curator

The Vernon County Historical Society and the South West Prairie Lutheran Church are collaborating to host a cemetery walk on Sunday, August 23, at 4PM, at the church and cemetery, located at S8466 Prairie Road in rural Viroqua. Everyone is welcome to attend.

South West Prairie Lutheran is one of the oldest churches and cemeteries in Vernon County. Worship services were held in the homes of early settlers until a log church was built in 1858. The current South West Prairie Church building, constructed in 1900, will be open for visitors to view the 170-year-old wooden altar and the unique decorated walls.

There will be a suggested donation of \$5 per person to attend the cemetery walk. Baked goods made from traditional Norwegian recipes will also be available for sale.

With the U.S. 250th in mind, the theme of the cemetery walk will be “We the People”. Seven people buried in the cemetery will be featured, six with Norwegian ancestry and one with English ancestors. All were farmers and community leaders with interesting life stories.

Soren Jerman (1812-1874) was one of the first settlers in South West Prairie. Soren will be portrayed by his 4th great-grandson Craig Woodhouse. Nils Bringe (1818-1906) chose to come to the U.S. from Norway to provide for his 10 children. Nils will be portrayed by his 4th great-grandson Armand Bringe. Paul Ekern (1915-1975) was a farmer and inventor in Sag City. Paul will be portrayed by his great-grandson Brooks Ekern.

Kenneth Hendrickson (1915-1989) will be portrayed by his nephew Ralph Hendrickson. Kenneth was a plumber and electrician, and he designed the Hendrickson A-Frame Tobacco Shed. A model was made of this shed, and the model was on display in the agriculture extension agent’s office in Viroqua for some years. Does anyone know what happened to this model?

Clarence Jerman (1918-1999) served in the army during WWII. Clarence will be portrayed by his grandson Seth McClurg. Genevieve Birkelo (1923-2024) taught in rural schools and was the principal at Seneca. Genevieve will be portrayed by her friend Lorna Crowley-Vento. And Keith Bankes (1928-2015) was a farmer and mechanic who built one of the first milking parlors in the area. Keith will be portrayed by his son Jody Bankes.